

57° 16' 42.92N; 5° 44' 20.42W

We've had a good summer here. Lots of sunny days and warm weather. The dastardly midges were about though, and trying to do any gardening with the wee bitey things flying around your ears and getting up your nose and under your collar can be very irritating to say the least. But midges don't like the cold, and now – hurray – they've all gone away (until next summer at any rate). If you managed to come and visit the island this year then I'm pleased and I hope you had an interesting time, and if you didn't – well...come and visit soon. There's a lot to see here and it's not often you get to see inside a lighthouse.

Summer is over and the winter is upon us. We've put out the birdfeeders, both for peanuts and for seed, and occasionally we put out bread and jam for the pine marten (pine martens love jam but they don't like marmalade – they leave the orange peel but eat everything else) and I occasionally throw a slice of old bread up into the air for the seagulls

to fight over. It's very interesting to watch how seagulls start to fly in from miles around as soon as they get the whiff of good food being given away.

Winter here is full of drama. The other night there was a very strong gale. The wind rattled the chimneypots and was so loud as it howled around the house that I had to telephone a friend and then pull open the front door to let her listen to the wind raging outside. It was a shame that it was at night as it meant it was too dark to see the white horses galloping along the loch and watch the high waves. And I wondered where the little birds that keep me company on my wanderings around the island go when the wind is so strong that it's powerful enough to blow me off my feet. I felt lucky to be able to stay warm and snug inside the house, and later the sound of the rain drumming on the windowpanes sent me off to sleep. It's good to spend as much time as possible outside in the fresh air, but sometimes it's better to stay indoors. The day after the storm was almost windless and the sea was flat calm and there was a blue cloudless sky over the Cuillin Mountains away in Skye. That night the stars shone bright above my head like a cobweb full of dew and a full moon cast a beam of light from the end of the loch to this little island. It was very beautiful and I felt lucky to be here to see such a thing.

It rains quite often up here, but not often all day. Sometimes it will rain for about ten minutes and the next thing you know it's bright sunshine again. When it rains and then shines like this we get beautiful rainbows. One day there was a double rainbow right over the island. When I was little I used to believe that there really was a pot of gold to be found at the end of a

rainbow. But after a few times getting stuck in bogs and marshes and muddy fields while looking for the gold I don't search anymore. There are seven colours in a rainbow. You can learn what they are by remembering the sentence 'Richard of York Gave Battle in Vain' (RED-ORANGE-YELLOW-GREEN-BLUE-INDIGO-VIOLET). A few days ago we had hail here and the tops of the mountains in the far distance across the loch now have white tops to them. We've not had snow yet, but it's coming...

Now that the clocks have gone forward it starts to get dark around 4 o'clock up here. But then in the summer it doesn't get dark sometimes until 11 o'clock at night. The weather forecast is for more rough seas and high winds and chilly nights. Today I sat outside the house and drank a cup of tea and watched fishing boats come racing back to port from the fishing grounds far away in the Outer Hebrides. The fishermen will be pleased to be tucked up at home with their families in warm houses rather than tossed about in a cold and damp boat in the middle of an angry green sea. Winter up here is a time for being snug.

So long and have a great Christmas,

*Dan Boothby - Winter 2005*